



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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For Immediate Release – April 6, 2006

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PSC Urges Consumers to Manage Heating Bills

MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) would like to see Wisconsin utility customers stay connected as the colder months come to an end. The PSC is advising consumers to contact their local utility company if they are behind in heating payments for the 2005-2006 winter season. Utility service may be disconnected from homes on April 16, 2006 if energy bills have not been paid or a payment plan has not been arranged with the utility.

To provide health and safety protections during Wisconsin's cold winters, PSC rules prohibit utilities from disconnecting customers between November 1 and April 15. However, after April 15, utilities are not required to provide service to customers who are behind on their bills. To avoid disconnection, customers who have fallen behind in payments over the winter are encouraged to contact their local utility to set up a payment plan.

This season, Wisconsin businesses and residents have experienced a significant impact on their household budgets because of skyrocketing prices in the unregulated natural gas market with the amount of arrears up 10 percent over last year. This year there will be 8,500 more families in arrears on their utility payments because of this upward pressure from natural gas costs on energy bills.

Consumers who need assistance in paying their heating bills may be eligible for heating assistance. Since last fall, Governor Jim Doyle has led efforts to more than double the amount of assistance available to help low-income families in Wisconsin pay their heating bills. Recently, the Governor and state legislature created a new fund to help moderate-income families who have felt the squeeze this year on their pocketbooks because of higher utility bills.

To find out if you qualify for assistance, please call **1-800-522-3014** or visit the Governor's Energy Help website at <http://energyhelp.wi.gov>. Eligible families can apply for assistance at their county social service office.

If customers cannot reach a payment agreement with their utility, they are encouraged to contact the PSC's Consumer Affairs Unit at:

Public Service Commission Consumer Affairs
Toll free: 1-800-225-7729
In the Madison area: 608-266-2001

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If an agreement is not established and the utility does not receive payment, the utility may disconnect service. Utility companies must inform customers before discontinuing service. In addition, the PSC strongly encourages consumers to be cautious when using alternative heat sources, such as electric space heaters. These devices are not designed to or intended to be used as a primary heating source. If left unattended or around children, the heaters can be very dangerous.

Wisconsin's largest utility companies

If you have fallen behind in payments over the winter, please contact your local utility company by calling the phone numbers below:

Xcel Energy	800-895-4999
Alliant Energy	800-862-6222
We Energies	800-842-4565
Wisconsin Public Service Corporation	800-450-7260
Madison Gas & Electric Company	608-252-7144

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